

Explaining the Ticket to Work Program

OVERVIEW

Millions of youth and young adults receive Social Security (SS) benefits in the United State. In 2021, the average monthly payment for youth under the age of 18 was \$687, and \$617 for ages 18-64, which includes transition aged youth and young adults. The federal poverty level for a single person household in the US in 2021? **\$12,880** ([Social Security Monthly Statistical Snapshot](#)). That means that young people with disabilities face considerably higher rates of poverty, and many end up seeking work while receiving benefits to survive. However, due to restrictions in how much beneficiaries are allowed to earn in additional income without losing their financial and healthcare SS benefits, there is often a lot of fear in trying to pursue work. Additionally, stigma and discrimination exists for disabled people receiving benefits.

Fortunately, resources are available that provide support and guidance for benefits, including the Social Security Administration's Work Incentives programs. One popular program is called Ticket to Work (TTW).

The TTW program is a free, voluntary program for people who want to transition to full-time work, but who are unsure if it is feasible for them. This program allows you to work while still maintaining your Medicaid/Medicare, with a safety net of returning to benefits if you cannot continue working.

When participating in a TTW program, you are given the option of working with an Employment Network (EN) or a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) organization to support you in preparing for, gaining, and maintaining employment through job coaching, support in job searches, and connecting you to resources that you may need along the way.

ELIGIBILITY

AGE RANGE: 18-64

****Must be actively receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits****

Eligibility will be verified by your chosen service provider, but can also be verified by calling the TTW Helpline @

1-866-968-7842 or 1-866-833-2967 (TTY)

Often these types of relationships are naturally built in our life, through our daily activities, including work and school.

STEP-BY-STEP ON HOW TO GET INVOLVED

1. Call the Ticket to Work Helpline at 1-866-968-7842 / 1-866-833-2967 (TTY) to verify your eligibility. A representative will give you an overview of the program and answer any questions you have, as well as suggest a list of service providers that are available to you
 - You can also use the “Find Help” tool on the Ticket to Work website to get a customized list of service providers in your area: <https://choosework.ssa.gov/findhelp/index.html>
2. Choose the service provider with whom you’d like to work:
 - You can work with an Employment Network (EN); or Your state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency, depending on your needs.
 - You can use the "[Finding an EN and Assigning Your Ticket Worksheet](#)" on the Ticket to Work website to help you keep track of the ENs you are interested in, and offers helpful questions to ask in your search.
 - Some ENs are also part of a state's public workforce system. These ENs provide individuals access to additional employment support, including training programs and special programs for transition-aged youth and veterans. An individual participating in the Ticket to Work program who assigns their Ticket to a workforce EN will either work with a workforce EN directly or other organizations in the workforce system.
3. After choosing your service provider, they will work with you to create a plan to reach your work goals. Your employment team will provide ongoing support to work towards these goals.
[**Planning Your Employment Goals with the Ticket to Work Program**](#)

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TTW WORK PLAN

A work plan is an agreement between you and your service provider that lays out what you can expect from your provider, and what the provider expects from you. Both parties will mutually invest time and resources in the pursuit of finding and maintaining employment, and building skills in order to reach financial independence. The work plan will be a written agreement that will be gone over by you and your provider, and will be signed as proof of both parties' agreement. You will be expected to make timely progress (TPR) toward your goals (TPR is determined by the provider). If you find that the plan is not working for you over time, you may consider revising your agreement or seeking a different service provider.

A Ticket to Plan Work Plan Requirements

Creating short and long-term goals around employment that will be discussed with your provider, and will be determined as reasonable by said provider, which will include the earnings you receive once you begin working, as well as what you expect to earn after your plan expires.

Short and long-term supports that the service provider will provide you. These supports may include career counseling, job search and job training assistance, resume writing support, and counseling regarding

benefits. Once you begin working, they can provide you with support around maintaining employment, finding another job, or increasing your earnings.

Working with benefits is a lot to navigate, especially as a young person. It is essential that these supportive programs be made visible and accessible to all youth with disabilities. In addition, it is also important that we continue to normalize and validate the experience of receiving benefits, as well as working with benefits, in order to reduce the stigma and discrimination that disabled people face every day.

KEY ACRONYMS EXPLAINED

EN = Employment Network - private or public orgs that may help with career counseling, job placement and more (ENs all provide different services, and folks can choose which EN is best for them)

VR = Vocational Rehabilitation - benefits, career counseling, education, training, and job search support

SSA = Social Security Agency

TPR = Timely progress (following timelines set by SSA for the work plan)

RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TTW PROGRAM

- [TTW General Overview](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Informational Webinar](#)
- [For more information on Employment Networks & Vocational Rehabilitation](#)
- [Find Employment Networks in Your Area](#)